

Fleet Mayor.

Mr. **FLEETWOOD'S**

SERMON

**BEFORE THE
LORD MAYOR, &c.**

DECEMBER xi. 1692

GOODFELLOWS

Fleet Mayor.

Martis xiiij^o Die Decemb' 1692.

Annoq; Regis & Reginae, Will.

& Mariae, Angl. &c. Quarto.

THIS Court doth desire Mr. Fleet-
wood to Print his SERMON,
Preached at the Guild-Hall
Chapel, on Sunday last, before the
Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this
City.

GOODFELLOW.

15

A
SERMON
PREACHED at
GUILD-HALL Chapel,
DECEMBER the xi. 1692.
BEFORE THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
LORD MAYOR,
AND
Court of Aldermen.

By *W. FLEETWOOD*,
Chaplain in Ordinary to their MAJESTIES.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Thomas Newborough*, at the *Golden*
Ball in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1693.

STERN

PREACHED

CHURCH

DECEMBER the XI. 1892.

THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

LORD MAYOR

THE

Count of Alderman

LEATWOOD

Compliments of the Mayor to the Aldermen

1892

LONDON

Printed by the Alderman, at the Golden



ECCLES. VI. 11, 12.

Seeing there be many things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better ?

For who knoweth what is good for Man in this Life, all the Days of his vain Life which he spendeth as a Shadow ? for who can tell a Man what shall be after him, under the Sun ?

THE great End and Design of King Solomon in this Book, is, to shew wherein consists the true and lasting Happines of Mankind; which he in short comprizes in the *Fearing God and Keeping his Commandments*. But knowing the World was old, and had been long in full Possession of another sort of Notions and Conceits of Happines than what he came to teach, he found it necessary, first to undeceive it of its Errors, correct its wide Mistakes, and root up its ill founded Prejudices, and

and Prepossessions in this Matter. And to this end, the Preacher (as he calls himself) well knowing 'twas as hard a Task to unlearn an old Mistake, as to take up a Lesson of new Truth, spends half his Sermon, in discovering to the World the Emptiness and Vanity of those four great Ends in which the Generality of Mankind had concurr'd to place their chief Felicity, namely in *Wisdom, Pleasures, Honours, or in Riches*; on each of which he argues from particular Mischiefs and Dissatisfactions, and irresistibly concludes, That each of them was *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*.

He was the fittest Man to pass this decreitory Sentence and decisive Judgment, that ever yet was born into this World, of humane Parents. For tho' there have been Princes of as dissolute a Soul, and as unbounded Luxury as *Solomon*; although there have been Princes that have rais'd their Slaves and Bondmen to Dignities and Wealth, that far surpass'd the Glory and the Riches of the Kings of *Israel* and of *Judah* both together; yet none of them were ever fitted equally with *Solomon*, to give a true Account and Character of either Pleasure, Wealth or Honours, because they wanted Wisdom with the rest, and consequently neither understood the Use and Worth, nor yet the Vanity and Emptiness of those Enjoyments. When we see a Man over-run with Pleasures, or behave himself with Insolence in Honour, or employ his Wealth to evil Purposes, we presently conclude the Fault is in his Judgment; and, That the things themselves, and in their own Natures, are such as Men of Wisdom and Understanding, may both place and find therein abundance of true and solid Happiness. But *Solomon's* Experience and the Sentence that he passes on them, is sufficient (one would think)

to

to silence all Suggestions of that Nature. He was the richest and most glorious King that ever rul'd in *Israel*, and made his Wealth and Power subservient to his Pleasures. And to all this the most consummate Knowledge that a humane Heart and Head is capable of bearing, was bestowed upon him; bestowed upon him at the first, and in an Instant too; not acquir'd by Art and Industry, nor labour'd out by long Experience; which kind of Wisdom is commonly bought with a great deal of time, and a great many Miscarriages and sad Mistakes. And if a King wise as the Oracles of God, and wise before he entered on his Wealth and Power, and Pleasures (which never Man besides him was,) if he pronounce this Judgment, both from the perfect Knowledge and the full Enjoyment of them all, That *they are Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, there is enough, without recurring to the Infallibility of Scriptures, to be certain of the Conclusion; for what he says elsewhere, is very applicable here; *What can the Man do that cometh after the King, but that which hath been already done?* The King hath tried and done all, and that with greater Assistances and more Advantages, than any Man besides hath done; and yet declares, That *all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*; and what can any Man do after him, but try the same, and make the same Conclusion too, if he be wise; or rather make the same Conclusion, without the Tryal, and be content to be wise at *Solomon's* Expence.

The Text is the Summ and Conclusion of all Vanities, the Epilogue of all these false Felicities. Seeing there be many things that encrease Vanity, what is Man the better?

It may be some One might object, What tho' a Man
do

do not find his Account in *Wisdom*, it may be, the pursuits of it are painful without Benefit, exceeding hard to get at all, and yet of very little use when gotten; and it may be that Conclusion is very true, *That in much Wisdom is much Grief, and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow*. Yet there are other things in which a Man may seek and find his Happiness in this Life, such as it may be, Pleasure, Honours or Possessions, and that if One should fail a Man, Another may be sure to make him good amends, for his Mistakes in Judgment, or his Labour lost in Practice. *Solomon* therefore (aware of this besure) concludes them all, upon Experiment, under the same condemning Sentence, tells his Hearers, That certain Happiness was not to be found in any thing of this Life: That it was never the better for Men, that there were many things and different Objects in this World to place their Happiness upon, since all those many things and different Objects carried their many and their differing Vanities along with them; and multiplied Vexations to their Pursuers and Possessours. What is it better for a Man to have more Occasions to employ his Care and Industry upon, since he thereby has but the more Defeats? What is it better for a Man to have Diversity of Objects to fix his Hopes upon, and raise him more and greater Expectations, since he thereby has only more and greater Disappointments?

This Verse is capable of, and hath had other Meanings put upon it; but this seems both the best and properest, and connects it with what went before and what follows — For, *who knoweth what is good for Man in this Life*. Though there be many things,
never

never so many things (which yet may be ranked under those four Heads) yet what is Man the better as to the attaining true Felicity in them, since they are all of them vain, and have no true Felicity belonging to them? but if they had, Man were as far from getting it as ever, since he is ignorant wherein it does consist, and what it is, would make him happy in this Life. *Who knoweth what is good for Man in this Life?* The most exalted Understanding in the World, the clearest Foresight and the strongest Reason, with the most mature Judgment is commonly as much mistaken in its Choice of what is good for Man in this Life, as he that commits it to the chance of a pair of Dice, or the Arbitration of some thoughtless Child: And that, because of the Uncertainty of future Events which humane Wisdom cannot possibly foresee, and the Instability of things present, which humane Power cannot possibly fix and fasten. And since it is not worth the Name of Happiness, that is expos'd to so much Chance, and of such short and such uncertain Duration, it is impossible for Man to know and chuse what is good for him in this Life, and where to find his true Happiness; *For who can tell a Man what shall be after him?* Who is there knows, what time to come will bring forth; whether to Morrow's Event will not spoil to Day's Happiness and quite unravel the best knit Plots, and frustrate the most probable Designs that can be?

The Words in general thus explained, will afford us three Propositions to consider,

I. That though there are many things, and great Diversity of Objects for Men to busie themselves about, and seek their Happiness and Satisfaction in;

B

yet

yet it is never the better for them, because they all increase Vanity, they are all of them vain, and 'tis in vain to think of finding our true Happiness in any, or in all of them.

II. That tho' these several things would really much conduce to the bettering Mens Conditions, and procuring to them Happiness, yet it were never the better for them, they would be never the nearer Happiness, because no Man knows what is truly good for him in this Life, and most convenient to the attaining of that End.

III. That tho' a Man should be so fortunate, as to light upon what was good for him at present, yet he would have no great reason to exult, because his Good may be short-liv'd, and change its nature in a little time; *For who can tell what shall be after him?* Of these in their Order. And *First*, That the Diversity and Multitude of Objects are all of them vain, they all increase Vanity. And this cannot better be demonstrated, than by considering in short the Vanity of those four Heads of Wisdom, Pleasure, Riches and Honours; to which the World in general is devoted, in which they think to find their Happiness, and to which all other things are easily reduc'd. And,

I. Of Wisdom, *I have gotten* (says Solomon, c. i. v. 16.) *more Wisdom than all they who have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had greater Experience of Wisdom and Knowledge; but, in the very next Verse he says— I perceived that this also was Vexation of Spirit; for in much Wisdom is much Grief, and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow.* Not to speak much of the Difficulties of acquiring Wisdom here, and getting but a tolerable Share of Knowledge; how many
Years

Years are spent in providing the Memory with Words and Images; how many in applying Words to things; how many more in fitting them to understand Coherences, and making them attend to Consequences and Connections? and when the Mind is thus prepared with necessary previous Elements, what work is there, to dispose it to see the Convenience and Necessity of its pursuing Wisdom? how much of Life is over-slipt, before it thinks there is any need of farther Understanding, and before it can be brought to set about that Business in good earnest? and when it is convinc'd and resolute, what Pains, what Trouble and Perplexities are there in laying down one single Prejudice and Prepossession? what Labyrinths and Intricacies do we wander in, when we would solve some new or old Effects of Nature? how deep and dark are her Recesses? how hidden and obscure are all her Causes and her Operations? how subtle and entangling are the Nets of Error? how hard it is to separate it from Truth; and how involv'd is Truth it self in Controversies and Disputes? what a World of staggering Probabilities on both sides? and if a Man be settled with some fair Appearances, and specious Amusements to Day, he is perhaps awakened by some sharper and severer Truths to Morrow, and the next Day's Thoughts put him again into a State of new Distraction and Irresolution. To name no more, How hard is it to fix on any point, and to pursue it closely to the end? what infinite Labours and almost insuperable Difficulties, does our inquisitive and curious Itch of new Varieties put us upon; so that we pass our Lives away in our Diversions and Excursions after collateral things, and lose the very Sight and Scent of our main Purpose and Design? not

to dwell, I say, long on these and on a Thousand, and Ten Thousand other Difficulties that attend the Acquisition of Wisdom, and the getting a little more than ordinary Understanding. Not to enlarge too far upon the Troubles of possessing Wisdom; its most insatiable and voracious Appetite; its never being fill'd with any Addition to it. Thirst after Knowledge is like that of Riches, and increases with it. It is, (as one hath well expressed it) like Drink to a Man in a Fever, which inflames the Appetite to a more impetuous craving; which is a very painful and uneasy State, and shews the Vanity and unsatisfying Emptiness of Knowledge, and brings Abundance of Vexation with it. Not to insist on the rest of the Disquiets that attend it. The unreasonable Fears it infuses into the Soul, by scaring it with fantastick and imaginary Dangers, which may come to pass; and perhaps would, if this World were governed according to the Rules of humane Wisdom, and an uninterrupted Train of reasonable Causes. The vast Desires it fills us with, as well from the Consideration of the Capacity and Comprehensiveness of the Soul, as from the good Opinion it cherishes in Men of their Abilities: The Jealousies it subjects Men to, from the same Reason, of making them self-conceited, and imagining sufficient Honours and Respects are not paid them; with other Doubts, Impatiencies, and restless Emulations, which are, if not the necessary, yet the usual Fruits of Wisdom in Possession: Besides the souring and corrupting all that Gayety of Heart, and chearful Temper Men would otherwise be of; there being nothing more observed to make Men peevish, fretful and morose, impatient of Opposition, and imperious in Conversation, than a retir'd and studious.

dious Life, and a close, severe way of Thinking, and Examining Matters.

Not to insist, at last, upon the danger there is of parting with this Knowledge Men have had in their possession, in a very little time, by the Treachery of an unfaithful Memory, by the Accident of some strong Disease, by the Dryness and Defects of Old Age; or, lastly, by the Stroke of Death, after which, *there is no more Remembrance of the Wise Man, than of the Fool; seeing that which now is, in the Days to come shall be forgotten.* Not to insist at large on all these, the painfulness of getting, the trouble of possessing, and the fear of losing Wisdom, all which do most abundantly argue its Vanity, we may suppose a Man, inspired as *Solomon*, with Natural Wisdom, and fully assured of keeping it till Death; yet it would not much contribute to his being happy in this Life.

There is no Man, let him place his Happiness in what he will, but either wants an Accession of some new Thing he desires, or the Removal of some old Inconvenience, or else a firm Continuance of the State he is already in; all which depending mostly on the Wills of other Men, or on Accidents in Nature, which are varying every Day, uncertain, unsecure to be relied upon, not possible to be fore-seen, or, if fore-seen, to be prevented. It is not the Wisdom of this World that can make or keep Men happy.

What if the wisest Man on Earth, wants, to compleat his Happiness, a new Accession of Estate, or an Inheritor to what he has, or Vertue, Wisdom and Sobriety in that Inheritor; which way shall Wisdom and Understanding make provision of these things? Since, as *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. 9. 11. That Bread is not to the Wise,*

Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill ; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all. But if he should have an Estate, and want an Heir, he would, it may be, do like Solomon, Ch. 18. Hate all his Labour which he had taken under the Sun, because he was to leave it to a Stranger after him. But if it were a Son, Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise Man, or a Fool? Yet he shall have Rule over all my Labour, wherein I have laboured, and shewn my self wise under the Sun : And, surely, this is also Vanity. And let no Man think it is unworthy of a wise Man, or below him, to desire, or set his Heart upon such things as these ; or want them, to compleat his Happiness : For Solomon's Experience, and a very little Insight into Humane Nature, will assure him it is otherwise.

What if the wisest Man living want to remove some Bar and Hindrance to his Happiness, (for it is with wise Men sometimes, as it was with proud *Haman* ; who, though he was the Second Person of an Hundred Twenty Seven Provinces, and received the Bows and Adorations of all the Princes in the *East* ; yet was not quiet for the Stiffness of *Mordecai*, one inconsiderable Jew,) they want some little matter or other in their way to be removed, that troubles all their Peace and Quiet : And their Wisdom commonly is as little able to help them out, as Folly it self would be ; whether the Bar be put by natural Accidents, or by the Obstinacy and Opposition of some Reasonable Agents.

For the first, Of Accidents : 'Tis acknowledged, that *no Wisdom is a Match for Chance* : But for the latter, Opposition of Men ; one might think that Wisdom might deal well enough with that ; but the contrary is commonly seen : For, What if a Man know both the
 Tempers,

Tempers, and the several Interests of Men, and understand the whole Art of Business, and the Management of practical Affairs, since it happens very frequently, that the Passions and Inclinations of Men do apparently prevail against their true Interest; so that, to deal with them in the way of Reason, is, to lose ones Labour on one hand; and sometimes Interest prevails against the strongest Inclinations, and the Bent of all their Passions: So that to deal with them in the way of Nature, is to lose ones Labour on the other side: And sometimes some unreasonable Pet, some trifling Jealousie, and some ill-grounded Errour, prevails against Men's Interest and Inclinations, and frequently their Judgments too. So that if a Man's Happiness depend upon his being able to deal with others, (as it often does,) it is, at least, an even Lay, that the superior Wisdom shall not be successful: And if he chance to light upon one that is as wise as himself, there is some Reason seen why he does not gain his Point, but no great Comfort in the Consideration.

But if, in the Third Place, a Man's Happiness require a Continuance in the State he is already in, it is not all the Wisdom of the World that can secure it to him. What Wisdom is it that secures Men from setting their Affections on the perishing Things of this Life? Where is the Philosophy that can hinder a Man from loving his Estate, or his Friends, immoderately? What Art or Understanding calls Men off from doting on their Children, from liking even every thing they say or do, from finding Wit in all their Words, and Grace and Comeliness in every Action? So that, when Death deprives them of their Friends, their Favourites, or their Children, their Sorrows are then multiplied,
according

according to their foolish Fancies ; and they have then a number of most solid, true, substantial Torments and Regrets, equal to that of their imaginary and conceited Pleasures ; and in this Case, they lose much more than ever they truly had : For, wretched is the After-Game that wise Men play, as well as Fools, on these Occasions : And there is no greater Mistake, than to think, that the Wisdom of this World (of which I have all along been speaking) is a Preservative against the Mischiefs of unreasonable and unruly Sorrows. For, Whether it be, that wise Men think they know the Value of their Losses better than the rest ; or whether their Senses are refined by Speculation, and they become thereby more susceptible of these sad Impressions ; or from what other Reason, they are commonly more stricken with those Accidents than other Men, and more impatient and untoward under them. So that, upon a serious Recollection, 'tis an hard thing to find the Advantage of Worldly Wisdom, above the Plainness and Simplicity of common Men : It contributes as little to Men's Happiness ; *it is altogether Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*

And if it be thus with Wisdom, (as might be proved from endless Instances,) which is, without Contradiction, and without Comparison, infinitely superior to either Pleasure, Honours, or Riches, there will be less need of enlarging much on any of them, or proving them improper for the procuring or preserving Men's Happiness. But because the World is in possession of other Opinions of these things ; and more Men live by Example, than by Rules of Reason ; and are more sensible of Pleasures, and the rest, than capable of being Wise ; a Word or two of each of them,

2dly, Therefore of Pleasures : It is certain, That the Happiness of this Life is that (and no other than that) which Men esteem their Happiness ; so that Men are never the more or less happy for placing their Content and Pleasure in things solid, or light, ridiculous or grave, superficial or substantial ; because it is the Opinion Men have of things, and not the things themselves that make Men happy. He that is worth 100000 £. yet thinks it is too little for his Purposes and Ends, is not happier than he that is Master of an 100 £. and thinks it is enough for him. He that has all the World, besides the particular thing he wants, is still unhappy, if he place his Happiness in what he wants. So that 'tis false and foolish too, to deny the Happiness of this Life, to consist in *Pleasure*, if by Pleasure we would only mean a *State of being pleas'd, a Rest and Acquiescence of the Mind in the Condition Men are in.* And *Epicurus*, fairly understood, was in the right, before the Oracles of God declared the contrary ; if they too did not rather only change the Particulars, in which Men ought to seek and Place their Pleasures and their Happiness, and determined them to things certain, constant, solid, and more durable, than the Light of natural Reason could discover to them. And therefore, when King *Solomon* declaims against Pleasures ; and says, *they are Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, he means especially Mens criminal Delights, their wicked and unlawful Pleasures, and those polluted Joys that ruine both the Soul and Body, and which by way of Eminency,

have gotten the Name of *Pleasure* fixt peculiar to them. But when he speaks of the Vanity of other innocent Diversions and Delights, it is then with Respect to their Shortness and Uncertainty; their Emptiness and dissatisfying Nature; the disproportionable Returns they make to Men's Desires, the Pains they are at to compass them, the Disquiets and Impatiencies of waiting for them, and the speedy Flights they take from them; So that 'tis hard to say, or name the Point of Time, in which they exist. And as little can be said in Behalf of *Honours* or of *Riches*. They are indeed, both of them exceeding useful and exceeding necessary to the World, but they are much more serviceable to Others than to their own Masters: *they* are commonly the last People they make happy, if at all: What serves the Pomp and Honour of a Coronet, the Veneration of a Mitre, and the Terror of a Judge to them themselves? they are serviceable to the keeping Dignity and Decency in the Commonwealth, to the preserving Unity and Order in the Church, and to the Security of Men's Lives and Families, and Reputations and Estates; but all the Benefit their Masters find in them, is from the Reflection of those Honours from the meanest and most miserable People: And if their Servants and Dependants are not happy or respected, it is manifest they think themselves dishonour'd and abus'd; and consequently their Happiness which is placed in these things, is exceedingly precarious, and in every Man's Power to interrupt and spoil. And besides, the
Happiness

Happiness of being Honourable, or very Rich, is much abated by the Restraint that is laid upon Men of owning or confessing it. For whatever other Men, or whatever a Man thinks of himself yet it is not come to that pass yet, that Men dare publicly boast themselves happy for either Honours or Riches. They rather chuse to pass some sober, mortifying Sentence on those States, and deprecate the Mischiefs that do commonly attend them.

Now though Men understand them pretty well, yet 'tis some kind of Trouble to conceal their Happiness, and not to tell, in what their Vanity and Folly do most abound. Not to enumerate the Dangers and Misfortunes these two States subject Men to, of being insolent, oppressive, vain, luxurious, thoughtless, and Abundance of other Mischiefs that conspire against Men's Happiness in these Conditions; few are the Instances whom Wealth and Honours have made happier than they were before, and many of those whom those two States have betray'd and ruin'd. But,

II. Although these several things would really much conduce to the bettering Men's Conditions, and procuring to them Happiness, yet Man would be but little better for them, because no Man knows what is truly good for him in this Life, and most convenient to the attaining of that End. Though all of them should in their own Natures, and in the Opinion of the World, be very good, and fitted to make their Masters happy, yet the Circumstances of Men's Affairs are so different

and intricate, and the Tempers of Men so humourfom and uncertain, and the Accidents of Fortune so strange and many, that, it may be, that which would make Ten Thousand People happy shall contribute to one Man's Misery: That which would make a Man happy this Day, shall to Morrow perhaps undo him. Nay, That in which Men have been happy many Years, is that which will at last turn to their greatest Grief and Misery. So short is our Fore-sight, and so vain and weak all our Endeavours, either to wish for, to pursue, or to preserve what is truly good for us in this Life.

What wilt thou give me, (said Abraham to God,) seeing I am Childless? When God had hardly made an end of promising to be his Shield, and his exceeding great Reward: As if it had hardly been in God's Power to make him happy any other Way, than by giving him an Heir, instead of *Eliezer of Damascus*. But when the Day of Trial and Temptation came, and this so long'd for Heir was to be sacrificed and killed by him himself, there is no doubt but the Torment of that Thought did far exceed all the Delights that he had ever taken in that Son; and he was so far from thinking a Son would make him happy, that he found it was the only thing that could reduce him to the extreamest Misery a Mortal Man is capable of.

What could be more honourable for *Jephthah*, than from a wretched and despised Outlawry, to be intreated by the Elders of his People to return,

turn, and take the Rule of *Israel* into his Hands? What Vows and Prayers could seem more proper and convenient, both for *Israel* and himself, than Vows and Prayers for Victory? Who is there, that, in those his Circumstances, can (even in Fancy) think that any thing was half so necessary to compleat his Happiness, as Conquest over *Ammon*? And who but would have thought that grateful Offer which he made to God, before his going out to fight, might have been a kind of Tye and Obligation to have both gotten and secured him Happiness? Yet all was contrary: He had better have continued a despis'd Exile, or perished by the Sword of *Ammon*; for the Sun that rose upon his Victory, and saw not an happier Man in all the Host of *Israel*, nor a more glorious and triumphant Conqueror elsewhere, yet shut not in at Even, a more deplorable and wretched Creature.

One Man fancies, That if he had but an Estate, he were compleatly happy; he would use it with great Temperance himself, and do abundance of Good to others. He finds himself disposed to do a great many hospitable and generous things; but wants Supplies agreeing to the Largeness of his Heart: He finds his Bowels Yearn at Objects of Compassion, and would relieve them if he could: He only seeks for Riches, to oblige Mankind, and conciliate the Favour of God, and be entirely happy. But if, by Accident or Industry, he does grow rich, his Heart and Purposes are commonly changed with his
 Con-

Condition, or his Desires grow even with his Substance, and he is still as unable to do the good he desired to do, as before ; the Poor are still as poor and empty as they were, though his Bowels still yearn on, and the Man perswades himself he longs to be doing good, but, to his great Discomfort, wants Ability. This is the best of the Case, That a Man with his Riches does no harm altho' he does no good ; but it seldom rests here, he is either tempted to forget God, and sacrifice to his own Dragg, or falls by degrees into a State of Luxury and all Excess, and makes the things that should have been for his Good, an Occasion of his falling ; and is to his cost convinced, That 'tis better to continue Poor, with good Desires, than Rich without them ; or with them, when they come alone ; and that he was not made to be happy by Riches, but was mistaken in the Means of compassing his End.

Another Man believes a Place of Honour and Authority, would make up all his Wants, and compleat his Happiness, and thinks withal, he should be capacitated to do a great deal of Service to his Country in it ; he should right the wronged, and relieve the oppressed, and do Justice to the Poor and Needy, with Abundance of other notable good Turns : But when he is in Honour and Authority, he grows it may be proud and Insolent, regards not right or wrong so much as Favour and Convenience, uses his Interest and Power to private Ends and evil Purposes ; and is, instead of being happier in that higher Station, but
more

more involved in Troubles, and perplex'd in Mind: And when he turns him to his inside, sees he was not made for Honours and great Places, and that his clambering upwards brought him not to Happiness, but to the Danger of a great Fall, and an uneasy Seat in the mean while.

Another thinks, his Good might be procur'd, by Oratory and the Power of Eloquence, and spends his Lamps and Nights, in reading the Works of the great Masters of that Faculty, and turning over *Cicero* and *Demosthenes*; but had better spend an Hour or two in reading of their Lives and Ends. To see to what unworthy Purposes those mighty Parts were oft abused, what foul and wicked Acts, those Streams of Eloquence were to wash away: what Emulations, Strifes, Contentions and Debates they were perpetually engaged in, and how fatal it was to both, *to speak beyond Comparison.*

The best Tongues have the most Causes, but they have commonly the worst too; and if they get greater Estates, they get the more ill Will and Odium with them. And 'tis hardly possible for them to thrive exceedingly, but to the Wrong of some and the Undoing of others. And who can think of being happy at the Expence of Truth and Justice, with any Comfort? Besides, That an eloquent Tongue and fluent is an Allurement to talking much and holding up a Controversy, which engages Men (in Opposition) to say a great many unkind Things, and a great many foolish and a great many false, and if true, yet a great many
vain

vain and unnecessary things : It puts Men on the Rack, and often sharpens the Wit to a degree of Keenneſs, that ends, without great Care, in Spitefulneſs and Ill Nature ; and, rather than want an Answer, or the making an handſom Period up, the Men of Wit and Fluence either chuſe, or happen, to loſe a faſt Friend, to diſoblige a great Man, and create a powerful Enmity. 'Tis like a ſharp and double-edg'd Knife ; for one piece of Service it does its Maſter, it cuts his Fingers twice : And is ſo far from being fitted to make Men happy, that, as hardly One in a Thouſand attains to it, ſo 'tis hardly fit for One of an Hundred Thouſand.

Another Man has a brave Heart, and ſtrong Sinews, and fanſies he is fitted for the Camp, and is deſign'd for Happineſs by Victories and Triumphs : But theſe are commonly the Dreams of Men at Eaſe, and the gay Reſults of Wine and good Company. He thinks not on the Toils and Hardſhips of that Life he meets withal upon Experience ; the Straits of inconvenient Lodging, unwholſom Diet, and inclement Seaſons ; the perillous Attempts, the Inſolence of Superiors, and Inferiors Mutinies ; the ſpiteful Emulations, the baſe and infamous Detractions ; the wicked Notions of Religion, Morals, and true Honour ; with the ridiculous Punctilio's of falſe : The ſevere revengeful Proſecutions of their idle Quarrels, the frequent Perjuries, the raging Blaſphemies, the horrible Enormities, Injuſtices, Rapes, and Beſtial Villainies, that commonly attend

tend that Way of living. And yet even this, and all the rest of the particular Conditions I have mentioned; and a great many more I have omitted, are, in the Opinion of the World, fitted to make Men happy, with the Happiness of this Life; and most of them, it may be, in their own Natures, would in some wise conduce to it, if it were not for our Blindness in seeking, our Ignorance in using, and our Folly in abusing them. But,

III. Though a Man should be so fortunate as to light upon what was good for him at present, yet he would have no great Reason to exult, because his Good may be short-liv'd, and change its Nature in a little time. *For who can tell a Man what shall be after him?*

This Head, does in some Measure fall in with the Other; and therefore, the less will serve to shew its Truth: And there is no Need of proving this by Arguments or Deductions of Reason; there is only Need that Men should open their Eyes and Ears, and attend to the Instances that meet them every Day, of private and of publick Persons, Families and Kingdoms, of Friends and Enemies, of Strangers and Acquaintances; how varying and uncertain all the Conditions of humane Life are; how little any Man can promise to himself or any else, the Continuance of the State he is already in; what sudden Turns of Fortune thrust Men out of their Felicity, which they imagined would have lasted them their Lives long; how many little unfore-

seen, unthought of Accidents disturb and quite unsettle the most fix'd and steady Course of Happiness? How one unlucky lowring Day rises and interrupts the Peace and Joy of our whole Lives, and makes them set in Sorrow and Despair. *Boast not, (saith Solomon) of to Morrow, for thou canst not tell what a Day may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1.*

Emilius Paulus was the greatest and the happiest *Roman* in his time, for many Years; he had four Sons of great Hopes, and thinking two of them enough to propagate his Name, he gave the other two to be adopted into the bravest and the noblest Families of *Rome*. And having conquered *Perseus* and his Kingdoms, (the Foil of four preceding Generals) he brought the King and all his Children Captives, to grace his Triumph and victorious Entry into *Rome*. But mark, how Fate with them, and with us the Providence of God, disposes of Events. The King design'd for Misery, had all his Children then about him, the greatest Comfort that his bad Estate could then bear, and the triumphant Victor lost his eldest Son a few Days before his glorious Entry, and his youngest three Days after. And though all Men thought before, that *Perseus* was the greatest and the saddest Instance of the Uncertainty of humane Happiness, yet then the Scene was chang'd, and all the Pity fell upon the Old and Miserable Conquerour.

There

There is no body, scarce, whose Knowledge, or whose Reading does not furnish him with Instances enough, and too many, of this nature, to confirm him in the Opinion, That the Happiness of this Life is of a very short and uncertain Continuance; and that no Man can have Reason to exult, or be secure in his present State, whilst liable to so many lamentable Accidents, and surrounded with such Hazards.

Since then (to conclude) all these things are so; since all is Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit; since there is no true Happiness to be found in any of those things, in which Men chiefly place it, What must become of us? Are we brought into this World to be perpetually deluded with the Hopes of being happy; yet nothing in it for to build those Hopes upon? Must we wander up and down, like poor bewildred Strangers, in quest of what we are never likely to obtain? Nature has planted in us all, we find, Hopes and Desires of being happy, but we are left, it seems, to seek it where we can; and to feel it out, like hood-wink'd People, in perpetual Maze and Winding.

And is there then no Answer to these Questions in the Text?

Yes, there is: And he that put these Questions, gives himself a full and satisfying Answer to them all; but it is so far from my Text, that I must but just repeat it; for it is the very last Sentence in the Book: *Hear the*

Conclusion of the whole Matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

If you desire to know what is good for Man in this Life, I will tell you: *Fear God, and keep his Commandments: That is good for Man in this Life: All the Days of his vain Life, which he spendeth as a Shadow. Though there be many things that increase Vanity, yet there is something he may fasten on, that has no Vanity, nor carries any manner of Vexation with it; and that is, Fearing God, and keeping his Commandments.*

Time and Chance make mighty Work and Alteration in every other State, but have no Power to interrupt and spoil the Peace and Happiness of this.

And, as the Ignorance and great Uncertainty of what may happen, argues the Vanity of all these other States, and is a great Discouragement to the pursuing them so warmly, and so zealously; (*For who can tell a Man what shall be after him?*) so the Certainty of what will follow the Neglect or the Performance of this our Duty of *fearing God, and keeping his Commandments*, is as great an Encouragement on the other hand, to the doing it: And that is, the Certainty of Judgment; *For God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.*

So that now we know *what shall be after us.*
And knowing what is good for Man in *this*
Life, is also good for him in *another*, we have
our Answer to the Questions in the Text : And
since we are convinced of the Vanity of all things
else, let us, at last, attend to this divine Conclu-
sion of the whole Matter, and *fear God, and keep*
his Commandments.

FINIS.
